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ABSTRACT

A study was done that investigated the effects of group composition on the activation of stereotypic evaluations. The effects of group composition on the subsequent activation of stereotypic processes in males and females was examined in a two (gender of subject) by three (photograph group composition: skewed, tilted, or balanced) design, with repeated measures on the latter factor. The composition of each of the photographs was varied to reflect a skewed group (token role occupants in a one-to-six ratio with majority group members), a tilted group (minority group members in a two-to-four ratio with majority group members), or a balanced group (minority and majority group members in a three-to-three ratio). Ninety-eight male and female college student volunteers were randomly assigned to view photographs of three different groups in tilted, balanced, or skewed arrangements. The reported analysis included only the 84 subjects who were white. Each subject saw and was asked to respond to three different photographic slides and asked to rate the attractiveness of each person included in each of the slides. Participants also read a brief description of three companies that provided the slides. Results, discussed in terms of the impact on the black target person, included the following: (1) judgments about a token or minority group member in a work group may influence subsequent judgments of minority group members; (2) groups that contain fewer blacks are presumed to be more efficient than groups with less extreme minority to majority group member ratios; (3) blacks in integrated groups were evaluated more harshly; and (4) whites in integrated groups were evaluated more favorably. Included are 14 references and an appendix containing 1 table. (JB)

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The Effects of Racial Composition on Evaluations of Work Groups: Tokenism and Stereotyping

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Abstract

The current research investigated the effects of group composition upon the activation of stereotypic evaluations. The impact of contextual arrangements in society upon the dynamics of tokenism was considered, and inferences drawn. Subjects were exposed to photographs of groups of employees of hypothetical companies in which the racial composition of the group of female employees displayed was varied. Subjects were asked to evaluate the group as whole, a designated majority group member, and a minority or token individual. While it was hypothesized that the lower the proportion of individuals with salient minority status the greater the extent to which racially stereotypic evaluations would be applied to a target member of that salient minority, results suggest that token or minority status may initiate overvaluation of target individuals.

Racial minorities and women, within the United States, have historically been excluded from the typical arenas in which majority group males labor, and socialize (Lewis, 1978). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination in hiring, firing, promotions, salaries, conditions of employment, etc., on the basis of race, color, sex, religion or national origin (Wallace, 1973). More recently, the Civil Rights Act of 1991 allows employers latitude who claim "business necessity", and at the same time attempts to redress existing Supreme Court decisions that appear inadequate in deterring unlawful discrimination. Many companies have adopted Affirmative Action plans that essentially involve decisions to expand the applicant pool in order to increase the potential for selection of minority and female candidates.

Tokenism

These policies have often resulted in the proportional selection of racial minorities and women (Wallace, 1973). Individuals in these previously excluded groups are hired for job positions in relative proportion to their representation in the greater society. Hence, the employer makes concessions by admitting a small number of minorities, women, or both to fill certain low-level positions. This reactive resistance to demands for increased integration is called tokenism (Morland, 1965).

Stereotyping

The discussion of stereotypes has undergone a number of changes over the years. Stereotypes traditionally have been regarded as irrational, isolated phenomena resulting from ignorance or xenophobia (Allport, 1954). More recently, stereotyping has been regarded as a normal, cognitive process (Stephan, 1985; Devine, 1989). Some researchers (Bar-Tal, Graumann, Kruglanski, & Stroebe, 1989; Tajfel, 1981) contend that a more inclusive and comprehensive conceptualization of stereotyping can be gained by expanding the social cognitive approach to incorporate other approaches to intergroup relations such as the "Authoritarian Personality" (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson & Sanford, 1950), and social learning theory (e.g., Eagley, 1987; Eagley & Steffen, 1984). One common theme throughout all approaches, however, is that stereotyping is regarded as a categorization process involving the ascription of traits to groups or members of groups.

Stereotyping is closely aligned with tokenism. A token role occupant is one who is distinguished from fellow group members on the basis of some definable characteristic, often gender or race, and finds oneself in approximate ratios of 15:85 with majority group members (Kanter, 1977). The dynamics of tokenism engender perceptual tendencies such as increased visibility, assimilation and polarization. It may well be that such heightened salience of a token individual

predisposes other group members to activate stereotypic processes and attributions.

Several other researchers (Yoder & Sinnett, 1988; Crocker & McGraw, 1984) have noted the role that stereotypes may play in attributions about token role occupants. Crocker & McGraw (1984) found that the consequences of occupying a token role were moderated by gender, suggesting that sex role stereotypes may alter preceptions of tokens. To date, however, the relevant experimental research has not investigated the possible role that race may play in eliciting the effects of tokenism. Sackett, DuBois, & Noe (1991) recently examined differences in performance ratings for male and female, and black and white workers and concluded that the effects of group composition on stereotyping behaviors (apparent in male-female contexts) do not appear to generalize to black-white race contexts.

The current research examined how experimentally manipulated group composition may activate stereotypic attributions and evaluations. Participants responded to three different sets of photographs of work groups within three different companies. The composition of each of the photos was varied to reflect either a "skewed" group (token role occupants in 1:6 ratio with majority group members), a "tilted" group (minority group members are in a 2:4 ratio with majority group members), or a "balanced" group (minority and majority group members in a 3:3 ratio). These ratios represent reduced forms of those suggested by Kanter (1977).

In line with Kanter's (1977) perspective on tokenism, it was hypothesized that the lower the proportion of individuals with salient minority status, the greater the extent to which stereotypic evaluations would be applied to a target member of that salient minority. It was also hypothesized that the evaluations of the group as a whole would be affected by its composition. Whether the photograph viewed reflected a skewed, tilted, or balanced group was hypothesized to affect subsequent evaluations of that group, of a target minority group person, and of an individual target majority group person.

Method

Design & Overview

The effects of group composition (skewed, tilted or balanced) on the subsequent activation of stereotypic processes in males and females was examined in a 2 (gender of the subject) X 3 (photo group composition: skewed, tilted, or balanced) design, with repeated measures on the latter factor.

Subjects

Male and female volunteers (n=98) participating in partial fulfillment of introductory psychology course requirements were randomly assigned to three different groups, tilted, balanced and skewed arrangements. Because only 14 subjects were not white, the reported analyses include only the responses of white male and female participants.

Each subject saw and was asked to respond to three different photographic slides. Attractiveness ratings of each person included in each of the slides (obtained in pretesting) were similar. Average ratings ranged from 3.8 - 4.1, on a scale of 1 (very unattractive) to 7 (very attractive). The order of presentation of the slides was randomized for each subject. Each slide contained the photos of employees of one of three companies in either skewed, tilted, or balanced groups. This type of distribution combines the advantages of both a between-subjects and within-subjects design, and allowed for all possible combinations.

Procedure

Participants read a brief description of each company that included information such as the company's line of business, gross income, size, and motto. The information presented for each company was evaluatively uninformative and similar enough so that subjects' evaluations would not be made on the basis of information that qualitatively distinguished one company from the other (other than its group composition).

Participants evaluated each group and the target individuals on three bipolar Likert type scales where responses to items ranged from 1, not at all, to 7, very. They first responded to items that addressed the group as a whole, then evaluated the target token or minority group

person, and finally the target majority group person, as per the following instructions:

> "Please evaluate the group of employees in the accompanying photograph....Now I'd like you to evaluate the second person in the top row of the group of employees (always indicated a token or minority individual). Please feel free in forming your impressions and circle the appropriate response for each question...Now I'd like you to evaluate the second person in the bottom row of the group of employees (always indicated a majority group individual). Please feel free in forming your impressions and circle the appropriate response for each question."

Subjects' evaluations of the individual employees included perceptions of the employee's capacity for warmth, dependability, intelligence, loyalty, and likelihood for success, and attractiveness. Evaluations of the groups included subjects' perceptions of the groups' level of efficiency, ambition, resourcefulness, talent, and capability.

Following evaluation of the third company and its employees, subjects responded to questions designed to assess their opinions on various public issues. Responses to these items were not included in the current analyses.

At the conclusion of the experiment, participants were debriefed using a procedure described by Mills (1976).

Results

The results are discussed primarily in terms of the impact upon the black target person. Whites rarely exist as token role occupants in white-collar work settings. No subjects saw slides in which white target persons occupied

token or minority status. Therefore, as a result of methodological and conceptual concerns, the analyses are conducted on data regarding the black target person.

While a summated score for participants responses to the group items, to the minority target person items and to the majority target person items would have facilitated a simpler analysis, it must be noted that different processes are activated for evaluations of the group versus the minority group target person versus the majority group target person. Therefore, three scores pertaining to evaluations of the black target person, the white target person and the overall group were derived.

Participants rated each target individual and group on five favorable attributes: warmth, intelligence, reliability, loyalty, and dependability each on a scale of 1 to 7. These attributes are five of the top twenty favorability traits of Anderson's (1968) ratings of 555 personality trait words. These ratings were averaged together to yield three favorability indices for each subject.

Although repeated measures analyses indicated no main effect for group composition, analysis of order effects of group composition upon evaluations of black target persons was significant. Significant multivariate effects were found for order ($F(6, 184) = 3.56$, $p<.002$). The pattern of results suggests that the point at which the skewed photo is seen influences later evaluations. Ratings for black target persons in tilted and balanced groups were lower if the

subject had previously been exposed to the skewed group. The relevant cell means are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

No main effects appeared for type of group photo upon evaluations of black target persons, suggesting that how the subject evaluated the tilted or balanced group following the skewed group was important only insofar as it was relative to the skewed group. That is, the evaluation assigned the skewed group essentially limited subsequent evaluations.

Additional analyses were performed for the items on the dependent variable that related to the subjects' evaluations of the overall group, and also the white target person. Interestingly a different, albeit random pattern emerges. Analysis of the ratings of the overall group reveal that while the same pattern holds for the tilted group, an opposite trend appears for the balanced group. Although not significant, the trend indicates that subjects evaluate balanced groups more favorably <u>after</u> seeing a skewed arrangement.

For white target persons, the results are entirely different. Both tilted, and balanced groups' ratings are higher following the presentation of the skewed arrangement, with the tilted arrangement receiving the highest ratings of the two.

Discussion

These preliminary data imply that exposure to a minority person in a skewed group makes salient minority attributes in such a way as to adversely affect later evaluations of minority group members, even when seen in different group contexts. Judgements made about a token or minority group member in a work group may influence subsequent judgements of minority group members. The token black member of the skewed group may have served to prime stereotypic attributes of blacks in such a way as to affect favorability ratings of black stimulus persons in groups subsequently viewed. This explanation is consistent with Kanter's (1977) analysis that suggests that the token role occupant may sensitize perceivers to minority stereotypes.

Groups that contain fewer blacks may be presumed to be more efficient than groups that boast less extreme ratios. Our subjects, white college students, evaluated blacks in integrated group arrangements more harshly, if they had previously seen a group in which a black person occupied a token role The opposite pattern occurs for white target persons. Subjects evaluated white target persons in integrated groups more favorably if they had previously seen a group that contained a token minority person. Subjects appear to admire other whites who belong to groups with moderate ratios of blacks to whites.

More practically, the results suggest that certain stereotypic processes may be operative in forming impressions

of groups when there are few or one minority person. A survey by the National Opinion Center (1990) found that 62% of whites surveyed think that blacks are less ambitious and generally lazier than whites, and 75% believe that blacks would rather live off welfare than work for a living. Given the pervasiveness of these attitudes amongst white Americans, it is likely that groups that include smaller numbers of black Americans are evaluated more favorably.

Furthermore, these stereotypic processes may have dramatically different consequences for the blacks and whites who occupy these groups. Blacks and whites in integrated groups are evaluated differently from each other. While evaluations of blacks tend to be negative, those of whites tend to be positive.

The implications of these results for affirmative action legislation are plentiful. Institutions that choose to integrate their organizations or work groups would do better to employ more than one, or two token minority persons. The minority-majority ratio of a group clearly affects its culture, individual group members, and intragroup interactions. While many of the psychological reactions to affirmative action are linked to the actual structure and perceived fairness of the procedures used to implement the policy (Nacoste, 1990), token role status is stigmatizing in and of itself and can be expected to engender strong negative evaluations by observers and tokens.

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Appendix

Table 1. Favorability Index for Black Target Group Members in Tilted or Balanced Groups As a Function of Presentation Before or After the Skewed Group.

	"Tilted"	"Balanced"
Before Skewed Group	5.53	5.38
After Skewed Group	4.73	4.98

Note: Mean ratings could vary from 1 to 7. Higher values indicate more favorable ratings.